decrease and extermination of wild life, all over the world and especially in the East.

Until a series of specimens of the Mauritius Deer has been submitted to the British Natural History Museum authorities, for critical examination, an element of doubt must remain as to which race of the Sambar they are referrable. Personally I am inclined to the belief that they will be found to belong to the typical race *unicolor* from Celyon. The description of the three-tined antlers of the Mauritius Stag, approximates closely to that of the typical head of the Ceylonese race, with the exception that the average stag in Mauritius would seem to have developed a slightly longer main beam. The record antlers of the Ceylon Sambar stag (*Rusa unicolor unicolor*) measure 33⅞ inches with a spread of 21¾ inches and any head measuring over 30 inches is considered an exceptionally good one for the typical race. Colonel Burton states that 'P.H.G.' gives the dimensions of good present-day heads in Mauritius, as averaging 28 to 35 inches, outside curve, with a tip to tip span of 18 to 26 inches.

The possibility that the Dutch liberated sambar from both Java (or Borneo) and Ceylon, cannot be overlooked—the present day Mauritius Sambar may be of mixed descent. This is quite likely as during, the Dutch occupation, ships from both Ceylon and Dutch East India must have been continually calling at Mauritius and, as the young sambar is easily tamed and does well in captivity, there would be little more difficulty in bringing sambar to the Island, than domestic animals.

The Dutch appear to have been much interested in the experimental introduction of certain wild animals into their possessions. Not only have we this instance of the introduction of sambar into Mauritius and the neighbouring islands, but they are believed to have been responsible for the introduction of the Hog-deer (*Hyelaphus porcinus*) into Ceylon, during their occupation. The Ceylonese race of the Hog-deer has now been separated by Pocock, under the subspecific name *orysus* (see 'The Larger Deer of British India', part iv, *Journal, Bombay Natural History Society,* Vol. xliv, p. 177). Unfortunately, unlike the Mauritius sambar, the Ceylon Hog-deer is a fast dying race, having been brought to the verge of extinction through night shooting, in season and out.

Rear-Admiral W. R. Kennedy, who contributed the original account of the sambar in Mauritius, was evidently, like so many naval officers, a keen sportsman. It was he who was one of the prime movers in the formation of the Ceylon Game Protection Society, which still continues as the Ceylon Game and Fauna Protection Society. Rear-Admiral Kennedy, who was then commanding the East India Squadron, took the chair at the inauguration meeting, held in Colombo on the 28th May, 1894.'—Eds.]

11.—STRANDING OF A WHALE (*MEGAPTERA NODOSA*) ON THE TRAVANCORE COAST IN 1943.

I was surprised to find that there is no reference to the stranding of a specimen of *Megaptera* on the Anjengo Coast near Quilon

in Travancore, in the list prepared by Mr. S. T. Moses and published in your *Journal* of Dec. 1947, p. 377. I had prepared a note on this then, but somehow it was not sent up for record. [Therefore no reason for surprise.—Eds.]

The whale was reported to have accidentally got entangled in a seine net. To save the net from destruction, the fishermen tried to scare away the creature, when it broke away and made a bid for liberty, which took it, however, towards the shore, where it was stranded. This accident occurred on January 23, 1943. On the following day, I visited the place and saw the whale with the greater portion of the body under water. It was alive and was gradually getting exhausted. It measured 49 feet 4 inches in length. Girth around the shoulders 38 feet 10 inches. Each flipper was 17 feet long.

The blubber of this specimen, was taken by the Marine Biology Department of the State. I am informed that the maximum thickness of it was only 4 inches and about 350 gallons of oil were extracted. The skull and parts of the skeleton are preserved in the laboratory of the Marine Biology and Fisheries Department, Trivandrum.

It is interesting that this species has not so far been recorded stranded on the Indian coasts—the only record being one off Baluchistan coast in July 1873.

Trivandrum. A. P. MATHEW,
May 15, 1948. *Dept. of Zoology, University College.*

12.—ON THE OCCURRENCE OF *SITTA FRONTALIS* SWAINS. & *SITTA CASTANEA* LESS. IN KHULNA SUNDERBANS.

Sitta frontalis Swains. was one among the few species collected by me during my short and hurried trip in August, 1944 to the Sunderbans (Khulna). Thanks to the courtesy of the then D.F.O., who kindly accommodated me in his launch 'Harrier', I had the opportunity of a halt for three consecutive days (Aug. 4 to Aug. 6) at Nilkamal, almost at the sea face. I observed *Sitta frontalis* Swains. occurring there as a common and abundant species and affecting forests not only along the sea face, but sometimes a little distance away. It is interesting to record how while taking recourse to a jolly boat I approached the sea and there got down to an island, whose surface level is generally above that of high tide, I encountered parties of *Sitta frontalis* Swains., affecting many a tall tree, mostly bare and devoid of branches, as well as fallen logs or overturned stumps lying on the sandy ground. They were common enough and were often noticed together with *Dryobates macei* (Vieill.), *Parus major cinereus* (Vieill.), and *Pericrocotus peregrinus* (Linn.). The surface level of the islands at a little distance from the sea face, however, is more often than not low and constantly being subjected to tidal waves. Access to them is only possible by means of a small boat along narrow channels and cross-channels, intersecting the stream or *khal* where our launch was lying at anchorage. I ventured into one such island on the morning of 6th August, but the slimy and slippery nature of the soil, invariably